**Problem:**

Many students come to college from all over the country with a variety of backgrounds. Some leave their hometown and find a very similar college town while others venture towards areas they have never experienced before. Does the distance from one’s hometown to their college town effect how involved one is on campus? I found background on college life from personal experiences, Nathan’s *My Freshman Year*, and used strategies from *On Ethnographers* to investigate this question.

**Background:**

As stated in *My Freshman Year* by Rebekah Nathan many college students were involved in clubs or organizations, “…my interviews with students about their extracurricular participation showed that about half of those in my sample were involved in professional clubs and volunteer work” (page 34, Nathan 2005). By completing my own observations through interviews I found similar results. After discovering that students are involved in clubs and volunteer work I decided to investigate why they get involved I also used On *Ethnography* by Heath & Street (2008) to learn new strategies for collecting data. Webster defines ethnography as “the study and systematic recording of human cultures; also: a descriptive work produced from such research.” Chapter 2 of *On Ethnography* discussed that to complete a study one should as all of the questions (who, what, where, when) but do not ask why. I followed this advice as I completed my own observations on college involvement.

**Methods:**

In order to further investigate if distance from home to school effects how involved students get I interviewed students. I collected data from students at Bloomsburg University, Virginia Tech, Towson University, SUNY Buffalo, Hofstra, and Syracuse. Using observations other students in my class had posted on their Wikis also assisted me in collecting data.

**Findings:**

**In-State Residents:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Distance from school | Number of clubs/organizations involved in |
| Person #1 | 1hr 45min | 2 |
| Person #2 | 1hr 30min | 2 |
| Person #3 | 2hrs 30min | 4 |
| Person #4 | 20min | 2 |
| Person #5 | 8hrs | 1 |
| Person #6 | 1hr 30min | 2 |

**Out-of-State Residents:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Distance from school | Number of clubs/organizations involved in |
| Person #1 | 4hrs | 3 |
| Person #2 | 3hrs 30min | 1 |
| Person #3 | 2hrs | 4 |
| Person #4 | 3hrs 30min | 3 |
| Person #5 | 2hrs 20min | 7 |
| Person #6 | 4hrs | 6 |

What attracts you to join clubs/organizations: {in & out of state residents}

* Meet new people/find new friends
* Get involved
* Help w/community service
* Meet people w/similar interests
* Gain new interests
* Deal with major
* Has cool activities (Tubioli, 2011)
* Build resume
* Enjoyable
* Peer pressured
* Keeps me active (Collins, 2011)
* Find people w/similar religious beliefs (Grant, 2011)
* Look for friends who are from the same area

**Conclusion:**

Based on my ethnographic data I discovered that students adjust to college by getting involved. This data supports what Nathan found in her studies in *My Freshman Year* (2005), which found that students spend their time in clubs and organizations. A key factor to my observations was the effect distance which one lived from school had on how involved they got, on average I found that the farther one lives the more involved they seem on campus. The tables shown to the left show on average that more out of state get involved based on the number of clubs/organizations they are in compared to in state residents. From most interviews I got responses such as students wanting to get involved to meet new people and find people with similar interests. Students want to belong more when they come from an outside state and tend to get involved to experience a sense of this new culture. Out of state students need to adapt to this new culture socially and physically so getting involved helps bring a sense of belonging. I can connect to these findings on a personal level because I am an out-of-state resident. I am from a region outside of New York City so coming from an area like that and entering a town like Bloomsburg, Pa I felt like I was in the wrong place and didn’t belong. By getting involved I was able to meet people with similar interests as well as people who are out of state residents that I was able to hangout with on weekends when we were unable to go home.

Webster defines ethnography as “the study and systematic recording of human cultures; also: a descriptive work produced form such research” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnography>)